

Global AIDS Program (GAP)



Under the direction of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator's Office, the HHS/CDC Global AIDS Program (GAP) is a proud partner in the unified U.S. Government effort to implement the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. GAP helps resource-constrained countries prevent HIV infection; improve treatment, care, and support for people living with HIV; and build capacity and infrastructure to address the global HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Making An Impact: *Stories from the Field — India*



Family members gather under the banyan trees at the Government Hospital of Thoracic Medicine in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

One of India's first Family Counseling Centers (FCC) opened in 2004 to provide patients and their families an opportunity to learn about HIV/AIDS prevention and care from trained counselors.

The Global AIDS Program (GAP) in India, the Government Hospital of Thoracic Medicine (GHTM) in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, and the Indian Network of Positive People (INP+) recognized the great opportunity presented by family members who accompany people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) to the hospital and wait under giant banyan trees while their family members see the doctors, or stay by their bedsides when they are hospitalized.

These are people who care deeply about the person who is affected, and who will play a role in whether or not the patient experiences discrimination. They also are the people who will play a huge role in making sure the people living with HIV/AIDS do well when they return home, notes **Dr. Dora Warren**, Director of GAP India.

Dr. S. Rajasekaran, Deputy Superintendent of the hospital visited Salem, a district from which many GHTM HIV-positive patients come. He met with the affected patients he had seen at GHTM in their own community and discussed their experiences with them.

Empowering families reduces stigma of HIV

Now, if you ask Dr. Rajasekaran about the importance of family counseling, he will tell you, "The family is the thing. If you are going to empower or give the family all of this information and the family will be revolving around the afflicted person - a care and support mechanism- there will not be any discrimination at least in the family. This is a definite need for care and support."

GHTM converted a ward in the hospital into the FCC, paving the way for a new model for HIV care, prevention, and support. The FCC now sees more than 25 clients and their families daily, providing counseling about HIV transmission, disease progression, treatment options, health management, nutrition, and risk management. The center's clients come from as far as 400 kilometers away and speak a wide range of languages.

An essential component of the FCC is linking clients to community resources through District Level Networks (DLNs), which are supported by INP+ and CDC. These networks provide ongoing support to the clients and families when they return home and help them find the services they need 'closer to home.'

The FCC is breaking new ground in India. Family counseling is a new concept, but one, the partners believe, that will go a long way in prevention education, stigma reduction, and ensuring that PLHA live in an environment that will help them lead healthy and productive lives.

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